THE BLUE BOMB

By J. V. GIDEY

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CHAPTER I.

The Derelict!

Gafford jingled the few yen in the pocket of his dirty ducks and gazed out to where the sun was gilding the waves of the China Sea. For the more particular one should perhaps say he swept his gaze over that arm of the sea, which forms the roadstead of Nagasaki harbor.

It was no new occupation for Gafford. Many an evening before he had loafed on the piers and turned his eyes about the harbor and jingled the yen in his pockets, unless, perhaps, the yen were not there.

Presently he leaned his shoulders against some bales, tiered behind him, drew paper and tobacco from a pocket, and rolled a cigarette, with the deftness of practise.

He lit it and let the first whiff of smoke stream from his lips. Again his eyes, brown and seemingly partly filmed, turned narrowed pupils idly across the glinting waters of the bay.

Without any conscious perception, he noted the shipping—the tugs puffing fussily about their business; the great hankas loaded with their varied cargoes; a motor launch cutting a white path from a pier; the sampans, like water beetles, skimming here and there.

His gaze lifted and went farther out to where a great gray shape showed a leviathan of war wallowing in the tide. The sun-flag drooped at her stern, its crimson rays cast into ruddy radiance by the westering sun. The sound of a bugle wafted softly to his ears. Gafford blew out more smoke.

"They're nifty little beggars," he muttered. "Sharp as the devil and shrewd—rather. The Keru is some boat. Superdreadnaught, thirteen-inch rifles. All modern improvements, as the householders say. Oh, well—" He left his conclusion unfinished and tossed the cigarette into the tide. He turned his half-glazed eyes still farther out beyond where the war-ship lay.

They fell upon a trim white shape, low, her funnel at a rakish angle, every line of her speaking plainly of potential speed.

"Yacht," said Gafford, mentally to himself. "Turbine, for a guess. Outrun anything but a torpedo destroyer, and make it hustle some." He wriggled the naked toes of a bare foot and grinned. "Some hae meat and canna eat, and some can eat and hae na meat," he quoted, and stretched his arms inside his cotton shirt.

"Ho hum!" said Gafford; "it's a hell of a world!"

—Again he jingled the yen. "To eat or not to eat—that is the question," he went on after an interval. "To eat or to dream—whether to purchase the plebeian bowl of rice and fish, and dull the voice of hunger or woo the insidious solace of the inspissated juice of poppies, and—forget? Well—"

A ray of the sinking sun fell upon him and lit up his face and figure. It was a gaunt shape, though one which showed that it had once been that of a well-proportioned man.

The bony framework still displayed broad shoulders, though in height he was certainly not more than five-and-eight. Under hair as black as that of the natives of Nippon, his face was lean, with the high cheek bones of the fighter, and a square set of chin and jaw, which should have given a firm set to his lips rather than the lax droop, which seemed to have become habitual now.

His cotton shirt, open at the neck, exposed the framework of a deep, full chest, covered with emaciated muscles, which might once have been elastic and full. To all of this the lack luster eyes of brown gave the key. The man was, a derelict—one of those whites who, from one cause or another, have sunk beneath the bondage of the poppy—who spend their time and brain in earning the wherewithal to gratify the craving which only opium can satisfy. He was a self-made castaway.

The water-front of Nagasaki knew him well. Beyond the day, when he came there, they knew him not at all. That day had been three years ago.

Since then he had lived his hand-to-mouth existence, gathering his few yen by work as a dock-hand, a boatman, a guide for tourists, by petty work or pettier knavery, as the case might be; spending them for food for bare existence, clothing sufficient to cover his body, and the pleasure of the opium pipe. Yet, even in his sudden dreams, no one had ever heard him mutter of the time before he came into that life.

But it was of that time that Gafford was thinking as he slumped against the bales. There were times when the wharf rats of Nagasaki forgot that the sallow stranger, who spoke to them in their own language, was not actually one of themselves. There were times when for days Gafford forgot it himself and gazed about him in a sort of sotted content. But there were other times.

Today as his eyes swept the trim lines of the white boat, far out in the bay, a vagrant breeze had lifted other bars of red and white than those of the sun-flag to his vision.

For a moment they had streamed before him—red and white about a star-studded field of blue. By some buried instinct he had felt a momentary straightening of his shoulders—something like a [illegible]re to doff the soiled cap which sat upon his hair. The impulse ended in a shrug and a muttered curse.

Yet it served as the spark which started a train of introspective thought of a time when that flag was his. Five years before Edward Gafford, graduate of West Point, lieutenant of engineers, gentleman and officer of his country, had been sworn to honor and defend that flag. Hard upon that had followed a period of suspicion and accusation.

It ended when a court of his superiors declared him a traitor, foresworn of his oath, a Judas who had sold his country's secrets for gold.

Gafford came of a proud stock of men. The elder Gafford, stern as a storied patriot of old, refused to credit the denials of his son. To his mind Edward had placed the first smudge on the family's escutcheon. That smudge necessitated that the cause of it be cut off.

Cast off by country and family, Gafford developed a reckless indifference as to what might become of himself. He left the United States and went to the Orient by way of the Sandwich Islands and the Philippeans.

In both places he found that tales of his perfidy had outrun him and barred him among people of his own kind. He drifted on, and, since civilized man must have companionship, he took what he could find. He drifted to Asiatic ports and finally to Japan.

Whether some subconscious prompting brought him to the land of the Rising Sun, or it was chance wandering alone, Gafford did not know. It is doubtful if he consciously asked the question of himself. Yet there had been one incident in his trial for treason which might have left him a chance to rehabilitate himself.

It was a theory, unprovable, discredited by his judges, yet lurking for some time after the trial in Gafford's brain. Proof of that theory, if anywhere, might lie in Japan. But ere he reached there Gafford had learned to drown both regret and longing in the acrid smoke of the pipe. He had even come to feel a dull resentment against the land which had cast him off, to deny his nationality to all men. It was only the flag which sometimes stirred the numbed pangs of the past to life.

In fact Gafford was a man who had slipped down because of a primary shove and no restraining influence to enable him to catch his moral balance. His mother, who might have offset his father's ill-considered condemnation, was dead.

What other woman, white, brown or yellow, had come into his life since he had drifted, had been of the sort who help no man up, no matter what they contribute to the fall of the many. Aside from their physical attractiveness, they had left no lasting mark on Gafford's mind, with one possible exception.

More than once he had grinned cynically at her exhortations, which urged him to climb rather than sink. Half full of the narcotic which slaved him, he had even pointed out that a woman who managed a teahouse of the second-class, and oversaw her backer's geishas, was scarcely the one to criticize or advise.

"White Kate," as she was known to the patrons of the House of Moon Faces, while admitting the incensitency still reasserted the value of her advice, and saw him depart without resentment. Perhaps her woman's understanding realized that there was a latent strength in the man, awaiting the proper incentive to bring it out. At least she gave him a different standing with herself than the contempt with which she regarded the other men who came to her house. One may place some credence in White Kate's estimate, for Heaven knows she had had opportunity to know something of men.

Her words were not without effect at that. There had been times of late when they woke in Gafford a vague loathing of himself—when he cursed the weakness which had made him sink passively down, where a stronger man would have defied his fate. In such moments something savagely primal woke and moved in his breast.

At times as he guided some band of curious sightseers about the streets of shops he asked himself if they were better than he. At times the rustle of a woman's gown filled him with an irritation well-nigh beyond control, which made him answer gruffly when she spoke in condescension to him. At times, as he held his palm for his meager fee, he longed to find within himself the courage to fling the price of his foresworn manhood into the smug face of the one who paid.

Bitterer still were those moments when he realized to the full that his manhood was foresworn; that he had made no use of the talents he had possessed, but had come to what he was because he had not tried. In those moments he sympathized with a personal basis with the slinking dogs of the streets.

The pariah and he were pals. Such moments brought him inevitably to the shop of Oku Kobe, where one found an innocent door leading into a narrow passage, which in turn led into a dimly lighted apartment, where flared the "fairy lamps."

There at least was forgetfulness of a sort from the sting of White Kate's words, and the loathing of what he was at last beginning to feel he had made himself. Yet, after his sleep was ended, and he had crept out of the underground temple of Lethe, he as surely went back to Kate.

Seated in a back room he listened to the sing-song of the geishas, the thrumming of a samisen, drank tea, or, more frequently, sake, and sometimes fancied that he caught a look of sorrow in the gray eyes of the woman who, like himself, was an expatriate. Perhaps that was the mutual tie which attracted. White Kate was the only person in the Orient who knew who Gafford was.

Like Gafford, Kate had a past which dated well-nigh even with his own. Gafford had known the woman in his cadet days, when she bade fair to rise to the dramatic firmament as a star.

He remembered her eclipse and the hue and cry which followed her name at the time she disappeared, leaving a dead man behind her and seemingly no trail. Dropping into the House of Moon Faces for the first time, some years before, he had recognized her with a start, and realized that, like himself, she was a bit of human flotsam cast up on the shore of the Orient.

Recognition had been mutual. She had come to his table and they had talked. He had found her living her life as she found it, with an openly expressed contempt for men and their ways.

She had found a man without a country—cynical, bitter, demoralized, nursing a festering wound of the spirit, and brazenly saying that he did not care—half persuaded that he told the truth—without aim or object or ambition; a creature of circumstance, as he frankly declared—yet not without a certain courage, exhibited at a time when he had saved her from a drunken brawler's knife.

Something of all this flitted in broken fragments through Gafford's mind as he sat on the pier. After a time he lifted his eyes and brought them back to the distant yacht.

Despite their narrowed pupils, their sight was good. Keen sight was a Gafford inheritance. Consequently he made out a tiny white dot, which shot out from the vessel's counter and made in toward the pier, and recognized it as a motor-driven launch.

He watched it idly as it cut across the oily roll of the ground swell—letting his eyes drop as it lessened the perspective. So at last he made out its lines with distinctness, and caught the flutter of the flag on the stern, where it stood bravely out in the breeze, created by the passage of the launch.

Something rose for a moment in his throat. The next instant he gathered his feet inward and made to rise. Yet quite inexplicably he paused.

A sudden stubborn opposition laid hold upon him. "Why," he asked himself, "should he rise and slink from observation because a bit of colored bunting snapped in the wind?"

"Like hell I'll run!" growled Gafford, and squatted down in mute defiance of things and men.

The launch came on, lost headway, and swung in to the foot of the landing stairs. From the pier Gafford watched with sullen eyes. They marked the trim uniform of the boatmen, avoided the now drooping flag, and swung to the other occupants of the launch.

They were two in number—a woman and a man. The latter was of a massive figure and a commanding presence. There was a quiet dignity, a sense of reserve force about him which Gafford felt.

Beneath his hat he caught a glimpse of hair turning from brown to gray, and a face which, while heavy, was strong. The nose was well arched and slightly aquiline. The eyes wide apart and set deep in their sockets were open and clear, and Gafford sensed rather than saw that they were gray.

But it was the girl who drove some of the sullenness from the watcher's eyes and awakened interest in its stead. She was hardly what he could call slender, yet one might not describe her as stout. Willowy was the somewhat hackneyed term which came into Gafford's mind.

He guessed her as possibly five feet five in height, and, having appraised her stature, forgot all else in her face. It was fresh, clear, clean. Its eyes were blue, and the swift harbor dash had brought a tinge of brown gracious cheeks and lips. Hair, soft and brown, had whipped out from under her scarf-trimmed hat.

She pushed it back into place as the boat rounded to the steps and stopped. Gafford always remembered her in that flitting glimpse as a glorious specimen of American womanhood.

"Here, boy!"

Gafford became conscious that the large man had risen, picked up a couple of suit-cases, and was extending them toward him, in the evident expectation that he would come forward and accept their burden.

For a moment resentment surged hot within him. The man had addressed him in the same tone he would have used to a native bearer or a porter back home.

A profane and insulting refusal trembled on his tongue, and died as his eyes fell again on the girl. He rose and shuffled quickly down the stairs. His hands received the outstretched cases, and he stepped back with his load.

The large man turned and assisted the girl to land. And in this moment, as she stepped to the stone of the quay, Gafford heard her speak in a tone meant only for her companion's ears: "Father—the man is white."

"Eh?" said the other and turned to stare at Gafford. "Oh—so he is," he went on, with a slight addition of respect in his voice. "Took you for a native, my man. Didn't expect a white to be sitting on the pier. My daughter and I are desirious of reaching the Hotel Nippon. Could you direct us, perhaps?"

Gafford nodded. "I am a guide," he explained, and turned up the steps, lugging a case in each hand.

At the top he whistled a couple of rickshaws, and saw the man and the girl take their places in the spidery, manpower, taxis of the Orient. Their luggage tucked in with them, he was about to step back when his own recent words brought about the second contretemps of the day.

The large man beckoned him closer and extended his hand. Into that of Gafford he dropped a coin and leaned back in his seat, fully satisfied that the incident was closed.

The metal burned in Gafford's palm not more hotly than the blood in his sallow cheeks. Raising shamed eyes to the girl, he found her cheeks flaming with a color not born of the harbor wind. Some of the man's old manhood woke and stirred and cried out that he should have come to this, and showed him the only way out.

He held up his hand to the rickshaw boys, already leaning forward between their slender shafts. Then, as they paused, he handed the silver to the nearest of the pair with a gesture of careless indifference.

"Take the gentleman and the lady to the Nippon," he commanded in their language, drugged off his soiled cap, and stepped back.

Under the spur of such tariff the boys fairly leaped away. Gafford caught a glance of amused admiration from the blue eyes of the girl as she caught her balance in her seat and was swept past. Then he stood alone again on the quay—the night wind rumpling his hair as he gazed after the disappearing pair.

Presently he lifted the palm which had held the proffered money and inspected it minutely, put it down, and rubbed it against his leg. "A white man," said Gafford. "A white man. That's what she called me. Huh!" He shrugged in a way which said indefinable things.

"A houri of paradise!" he muttered some time after, turned and looked up into the sky, where a star had come out and winked back at him.

His hand in his pocket fumbled his few yen. "That settles it, I guess," said Gafford. "It's Lethe and Hepenthe for mine."

CHAPTER II.

Gafford Overhears.

In Nagasaki the streets of the shops parallel the water-front. They are two in number, lined with one-story buildings for the most part, built against the hill, up which the city climbs. There are other shops, of a better class, which collected the main mass of merchants, who cater to the curiosity of the traveler and the vices of foreigner and native alike.

Almost every other door flaunts its curios and souvenirs, like bait for the coin of the tourist. Scrutched between, or at times underneath, one finds the tea-houses and native restaurants, the gambling houses, and—the hop joints, provided he knows where to seek.

Gafford, walking from the water-front, turned into the first of these streets and slouched paddingly along. To the stranger there would have been nothing to point the end of his soft-footed advance. English is little used in Nagasaki. The signs flaunting their brilliant colors at the doors of the shops, while intelligible enough to a son of Nippon, would have been but tangled ideographs to any one unacquainted with Japanese.

But Gafford paid no attention to signs. When one had followed a path a great many times, after a bit the process becomes automatic. His method of arrival at the place he sought was rather instinctive than objectively conscious.

Presently he paused before the door of a shop whose windows showed carved ivory figures, bits of hammered brass, grotesque devil masks, carved sword scabbards, and a dried fish's tail grafted upon a weird cast of the torso, and head of a human with straggly gray hair—the whole making a hybrid representation of the fabled mermaid as it swung in the window on a string.

Gafford paid no heed to such frippery as this. He swung through the door and entered the shop, where Oku Kobe, the owner, sat behind a carved desk of teak-wood, making symbols in a book.

He looked up as Gafford came in, gave him a swift glance of appraisal, and dropped his eyes. Gafford, without turning his head, returned the eye-message sidewise, passed between two tables loaded with the catch-penny masks of Oku's real business, and found a door back of a curtain of bamboo.

Dragging it open, he slipped through and found himself in a passage so narrow that it was barely wide enough to accommodate his shoulders, when he turned toward a dim glow, marking a stair head. His naked feet made no sound as he slipped along its length and down the eight or ten steps of the stair.

A door with a movable wicket appeared before him, upon which he rapped. The shuffle of a footfall came from the other side. The wicket was moved slightly and an eye glinted at him where he stood under the dim light. That eye apparently recognized his face, for without further parley, the barrier to his entrance was withdrawn.

He emerged into a rectangular apartment, lighted from the center by a hanging lamp of hammered brass. The light it gave out was barely enough to show that three sides of the room were surrounded by a low padded divan or couch. From the ceiling bamboo curtains, spaced at the intervals of a man's height, dropped down to the couch, dividing it into sections. An acrid odor, oppressive to the breathing of the uninitiated pervaded the atmosphere.

As of custom, Gafford crossed the room to a section far back in the corner, where the wall angled, and sat down upon the not overly clean canvas of the couch. He tossed his cap behind him against the wall and jabbered a short word to the attendant who had let him in.

The man turned and departed, to return after a bit with a small tray, on which was an opium pipe, a supply of the gum, the yen gow or needle upon which the opium is heated, and a tiny lamp of flaming oil.

Depositing this on a small stand beside Gafford's bunk, he retreated beyond the swinging screen and was lost to sight.

Gafford dug out a bit of gum from the jar, impaled it on the yen gow, and turned it slowly above the flaring peanut oil. His eyes focused upon it as he turned it. By and by it began to exude a strange nutty flavor.

He examined it with increased attention, decided that it was ready for consumption, and took up the bamboo pipe, with its shallow metal bowl. Placing the "pill" over the central opening of this he drew the tray closer to his bunk, reclined upon his side, and held the cooked gum to the flame of the fairy lamp.

It fumed acridly upon the air. Once, twice, and again Gafford drew its narcotic vapor into his lungs. The opium gurgled and snapped in the pipe. The man relaxed somewhat. The tense look of desire lessened in his face, to give way to a sort of content. He stretched his arms, yawned, and lay back on the bunk for a time. Presently he was cooking more of the gum.

There are people, who suppose that a man smokes a pipe of the gum and lapses into beatific dreams. The beginner may succumb to his first pipeful, and the chances are that his dreams will be anything but pleasant.

On the other hand, the old smoker takes his pleasure slowly and smokes pipe after pipe before sleep claims him. The intervals between his pipes he spends in a sort of mental, physical, and moral relaxation, wherein his subjective mind weaves fancies untrammeled by any volitional control. Such a one will be susceptible to sight and sound in a gradually lessening ratio as unconsciousness approaches.

It is this state of blissful irresponsibility which constitutes the greatest pleasure of the slaves of the drug. Gafford reached it after he had smoked his fourth pill. By that time, while perfectly conscious of what might go on around him, he had ceased to trouble his spirit concerning things mundane. Honor or dishonor, the words of White Kate, the opinion of his fellow man, mattered not at all.

A restful sense of reserve-power fired his veins. The hunger of an unsatisfied stomach ceased to gnaw. Yet, because his senses were stimulated for the time rather than obtunded, he heard the rap on the door.

There followed the shuffle of the attendant, a pause while he glanced through the wicket, and the sound of footfalls crossing the room toward the divan.

Without particular interest Gafford became aware by hearing alone that the newcomers had taken seats upon the section of the couch next to his own. He heard them order their "layout" of the attendant, heard the man depart and return, without the slightest curiosity as to whom the new patrons might be. He was too old an inmate of the place to give heed or attention to what one went or came.

Quite unexpectedly his interest received a fillip. The footfalls of the attendant had disappeared before either of the new arrivals spoke. Then it was a slightly accented English which fell upon Gafford's ears.

"And now, my honorable friend, as we used to say at dear old Harvard: 'Get it off your chest.' Also permit me to suggest that you speak English, as it is certain the attendant in this place will not understand that tongue. While—you talk you may as well prepare me a bit of gum."

"But, excellency," said the other, "I have said it all before. You know—"

His companion chuckled. "You have a habit of repetition, Yamata. Doubtless you have acquired it in your business. However, you said you desired to talk with me."

The other lowered his tone. "It is of war, honorable Oshitu, that I wish to speak."

"Oh," said Oshitu, "of war?"

Some of the recent laxness went out of Gafford's body, and he stiffened. Years ago he had heard that same cynical drawl. A quiver shook him for an instant.

He closed his eyes and strained his ears to hear. After a pause the voice went on. "That is sufficiently cooked, Yamata, I believe. If you don't mind I will smoke while you talk."

There followed the gurgle of a pipe and the voice spoke again in a tone of amusement. "Well, honorable snail—go on!"

"We want war!" burst out his companion.

"You or your pocketbook, Yamata?" Oshitu drawled.

"Excellency!" protested the victim of innuendo in a pained voice. "Of course," he went on, "I do not pretent' that I do not inten' to stan' our agreemen'. You an' I would be fools not to seize opportunity to increase our fortune. But why should I argue? At Cambridge, did they not teach me the saying: 'Take time by the forelock?' You are of the war party yourself?"

"I am a soldier," Oshitu replied.

"And," said the other, "as a soldier an' a Nipponese you know tha' the Philippines mus' one day be ours. Geographically they are ours already. They are an unopen mine of grea' wealth, my frien'. Now, 'cou' be no better time than now, w'en the Americans are not only unprepare', but think in their heart tha' we are wha' they call 'bluffing.' Give Nippon the islands, an' Nippon will become grea'—a web' power—somethin' to reckon with. An' so I say we wan' war—so soon as we are ready—before the Americans expect it—"

"But we are not ready—yet," Oshitu interrupted.

"Tha' is the point," persisted the other. "You are a soldier—an engineer. You are in close touch, in high favor with government, as your family has been for generations. You were sen' to America for education, an' after tha' to their military school, where the fools have educate' other of our sons. After tha' you were accorded the honor of a special assignment to gain information of value to Nippon, an' your success was so grea' tha' they believe one of their own officer guilty, an' your honor was greater when you return home, tha' they did not suspect. It was for tha' that you were select to have charge of the manufacture of these blue bomb—"

"Careful," snapped Oshitu. "I told you not to mention those words."

"Your pardon, honorable Oshito," his companion apologized. "But it is you who s'all know w'en they are ready. A word from you, and I, Yamata, s'all know that it is time to lay lines to secure government contract favor. It is not often that a word can make a man rich."

"As I have told you," returned the other, "the things are not ready."

"But they will be?"

"Of course."

"And then?"

"We also will be ready."

"And after that?"

"A pretext," Oshitu finished.

"That should be easy," declared Yamata. "They still pass their alien land laws in State after State. They discriminate unjustly against our citizens. Then—when it is certain—we can surely find our pretext. A word to me at tha' time. O Oshitu, an' we are rich men. How near is it, my illustrious frien'?"

"A matter of days."

"So near? Ah! An' this man Karloff—this insane nihilist who dreams of making war so terrible that it will become a thing impossible—has he divulged his final secret?"

"He still dreams," said Oshitu, with a chuckle. "He is both as wise as a wizard and as simple as a small child. Even now he is causing delay because he insists upon making the firing devices with his own hands. When that is completed, there will be a demonstration."

"These firing devices are the principal secret?"

"Exactly; though the whole thing is wonderful enough. The drawings for the firing mechanism are the only things we have not obtained from him already. I doubt myself if they exist outside Karloff's mind. He refuses to give out any definite information until after he has made his demonstration and been paid."

"And then?" suggested Yamata."

"We will have the whole thing, and Karloff his gold."

"But what will he do? Where will he go? What guarantee have we that he will keep our secret when he has been paid and disappears?"

To Be Continued.

Did His Best

"Yesterday," began the man who traveled for a biscuit company, as he dealt the cards, "I dropped into Obbs' grocery to take his order.

"Obbs was at the 'phone as I walked into his store. I heard him say: 'Yes Mrs. Flubb, I'll send them right over.'

"Then he called to a boy: 'Ten cents worth of potatoes for Flubb. Take 'em right over.'

"The boy soon departed. 'All my wagons are at the other end of town,' Obbs explained, 'so I had to send my boy with the potatoes.'

"'That's the way it is,' I said, shaking hands with Obbs. 'Wagons all at the ends of the blessed earth and a rush order comes in!'

"Obbs only grunted. I took out my pencil and pad—but just then the 'phone rang again. 'Yes, Mrs. Flubb,' I heard Obbs say. 'Five cent worth of matches? All right. I'll send them right over. Yes, the boy is on his way with the potatoes, but I'll send my man with the matches. That's all right, Mrs. Flubb.'

"Then the man was told to go with the matches. He took off his apron very deliberately and departed for the Flubb residence, grumbling.

"'Pretty good customer,' I remarked to Obbs. 'Orders something every five minutes.'

"Obbs grunted and looked at his watch. I wet my pencil and started to write when a man came in and began to size up the apples. Obbs started to exhibit the apples and explain their good points to the customer when the 'phone rang again.

"'Yes, Mrs. Flubb,' said Obbs at the 'phone. 'Yes, the matches are on the way. Soap? Five cents? Well—er—yes, I will run over with it myself.'

"The customer who was looking at apples appeared to be keenly interested. I explained to him that a certain Mrs. Flubb was overtaken in the habit of having her groceries arrive in relays. Obbs departed with the bar of soap and as soon as he was on his way the 'phone rang again.

"'No doubt it is Mrs. Flubb,' I said. So I went over to the 'phone.

"'Hello,' I said. 'Yes, Mrs. Flubb; 10 cents worth of prunes? I will bring them right over.'

"I looked up her address, grabbed some prunes and started out, first directing the customer to answer Mrs. Flubb the next time the 'phone rang and deliver whatever she wanted, as in all probability the boy who had departed for her house with the potatoes would soon return to take charge of the store.

"Just as I went out of the door the 'phone rang again. I stopped to listen. The customer went to the 'phone.

"'Yes, Mrs. Flubb,' I heard him say. 'Ten cents worth of salt? All right. I will bring it right over. Guess you are having a sort of grocery employes' reunion at your house today, aren't you? There are four men on the way there, and I will make five. I must say that I admire your method of ordering groceries.

"'Oh, I am impudent, am I? And you will report me! Who am I? I am Phineas Arbuthnot Flubb, your adoring husband, that's who I am.'"

CARRIES A BIG GUN ON FLIGHT

New Army Aeroplane Is Able to Lift 3,300 Pounds

A new military biplane which can lift 3,300 pounds and remain in the air twenty-five hours has been given successful trials in Italy. The machine has three motors which develop an aggregate 600 horsepower and it is said the craft can attain a speed of 75 miles an hour. It carries a big rapid fire gun. On its height trial the machine went up 6,500 feet.

His Suggestion

A pompous city official upon reaching his home one evening found the street blockaded and a heap of earth piled against his doorstep. Observing a workman wielding his shovel in a nearby ditch, he accosted a passing policeman and complained that the laborer was trespassing upon private property.

"What do yez mean by throwin' dirt on th' gintleman's steps?" demanded the officer pompously.

"Sure, an' there's no other place t' throw it, d'ye mind!" replied the workman, indifferently.

"Well, thin, in thot case, yez had better dig another hole and trow it in there."